

RED WIZARD GAMING DESIGNS

THE STELAE OF HISTORY AND THE CURSE OF UNCERTAINTY

This room is designed to allow large amounts of information to be delivered in a method that is more interesting and fun than simple exposition. It is designed to last approximately 2 sessions, depending on how quickly your players progress. The design is very heavily borrowed from Hankerin Ferinale (Brandish Gilhelm) of [Runehammer](#) and the map is taken directly from his video, '[Room Design: The Lore Stones](#)'. The variations to his original design are inspired by a book series called the [Lightbringer Series](#) by [Brent Weeks](#).

This is designed as a series of encounters, each unveiling some element of important history within the setting of your game world. Of course, any element of this may be adjusted to better fit, but the details I have written below are how I imagine running this.

Background: There is an ancient culture, largely lost to time but still surviving, lost in the deepest jungles of the world. At some long-forgotten time in the city's history, the inhabitants slighted a powerful witch and she cursed them to an eternity of uncertainty. They would be destined to not know their history or be able to predict their future. The real history of the people was captured in 5 large stones covered in runes and images depicting great deeds, though the natives never venture into the cave for fear of the curse of perpetually impending doom. The only way to break the curse is to rediscover the past. This will restore their history and allow them to move forward as a culture. The reason none of them have tried is that to fail will condemn their culture to oblivion. They now guard the room, preventing entry to any that would enter, for fear of their own lives and the future of their people.

Mechanics: Each stone depicts a different major point in the culture's history. As each stone is read aloud, anybody within the immediate vicinity are pulled into the words as they flash with wicked energy. They find themselves in the bodies of those mentioned in the story, seemingly to live through the experience again. This time is different though; what changes they affect within the living memory becomes actual history.

If they paid attention to the story that was read before they entered, they can choose to complete the memory as close to the words as possible, preserving as much of the original history as they can. They can also choose to try and change things, be they for better or worse, over the course of the memory.

If they change the memory drastically or fail to complete it, whether by all dying or choosing not to engage, when they re-emerge into the cavern, the stela cracks and shatters, dealing force damage equal to half of their current hit points. If they succeed, the magic fades from the stone and it remains intact. Either way, the curse is lifted from that memory. Whether they succeed or fail, if they attempt to take a short or long rest to regain hit points, they are unable to do so. The ambient magic in the air doesn't allow them to become at ease enough to gain the effects from resting. All other forms of healing, such as spells or potions, still work without adjustment.

As they play each memory, have character sheets already made up for them. Tell your players that they find themselves in the body of the heroes of this memory. They must learn that hero's abilities and their place within that world to progress through.

The final stone is larger, more intricate and contains an epic story of how the land was narrowly saved from the clutches of destruction by whichever great evil force plagues your land. This should be the players chance to feel what epic level encounters can be like. This fight is the one that forever changed the landscape; make sure it feels suitably epic.

Once the final stele has been completed, the witch appears, intent of stopping the intruders that are destroying her handiwork. She is weakened though, as her spirit was used to create her hex. For each memory they complete, whether successfully or not, the curse on that stele is broken and her power is depleted noticeably. Once she is dispatched, there is a shockwave of energy that rocks the land as the curse finally releases its death grip. Now free, the civilisation is able to expand and re-establish themselves. They thank the players and bestow fine and powerful gifts upon them.

Pros: This series of encounters not only allows you to tell a lot of the history of the land, but it allows the players to have a hand in writing that history, even before being powerful enough to influence the future of the country. It can also be used as a way to give the players a taste of high-level characters. This can be useful in building excitement in upcoming story arcs, as well as encouraging player agency within your world. In addition, it can open them up to understanding the level of magic in your world, if they weren't already aware.

Cons: I feel like this is an obvious one, but if you implement this as a GM, you're making an extraordinary amount of work for yourself. Not only do you have to plan the set up for this encounter, but once there, you need to design 5 separate encounters that are all tied into the existing lore. This will require a lot of planning on your part.

Recommendations: This layout is recommended for approximately level 5. If you start at level 1, this will give the players time to understand their characters and not be too overwhelmed with the higher-level characters that they'll be getting to play. It will also make the jump in power that much more noticeable. It is also recommended that each stele increase in power the further they travel. This will give a gradual build up to the final encounter. Levels 10, 12, 14 and 16 will convey the scaling power well. The final encounter should be with level 20 characters. This will help give the sense of world-altering power and the ability to shape reality and history. As for the which, definitely make it a deadly encounter. If your party are level 5, I'd recommend perhaps CR 8 or 9 for them. Remind them that this is her depleted form. Perhaps describe her attempting to take actions that fizzle out or don't work due to her lack of power. This will help to gratify the feeling of accomplishment the players will get after each stele.

